

West Keizer Neighborhood Association

Special Board Meeting Minutes

7 p.m., April 16, 2014, at Keizer Rapids Park
Submitted by Carolyn Homan, secretary

Attending: Rhonda Rich, President; Carolyn Homan, Secretary; Gary Blake; Clint Holland; Ron Freeman, WKNA representative to KRP Big Toy planning group; City Councilor Jim Taylor; Richard Walsh, co-chair, Big Toy task force; neighbors Trisha and Josh Barnett and their two girls from Todd Ct.; and neighbor William Gard, from Tate Ave.

President Rhonda Rich called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the boat ramp parking lot of Keizer Rapids Park. Introductions were made around the group and Rhonda distributed some hand-outs pertinent to the planned discussion – siting of the Big Toy play structure at KRP. Hand-outs included minutes from the April 9 Keizer Planning Commission meeting; information prepared by Sam Litke, Keizer senior planner, for the planning commission related to the UGB Amendment to expand the UGB to include the 28-acre Buchholz filbert orchard property, which was annexed into the city at time of purchase; definitions of comprehensive plan terms related to the annexation (this handout also was provided at the recent WKNA general meeting); and three maps: 1) of KRP highlighting existing features and the areas proposed to be brought within the UGB; 2) the KRP Master Plan draft of Sept. 6, 2006; and 3) the schematic outline of the Big Toy and proposed parking, as placed in Site B just north of the boat ramp parking lot.

Rhonda brought some information to the group's attention – Pg. 2 of the Planning Commission minutes detailing Rhonda's comments to the commission about WKNA's stance on the annexation: 1) that the 28 acres should be added to the KRP Master Plan; 2) that the existing buffer zone in the current Master Plan be extended and made 75 to 100 feet wide along the east edge of the annexed property up to Chemawa Road; and 3) that no filbert trees be removed from the 28-acre orchard property until the Master Plan for the area has been approved. Pg. 2 also notes the Planning Commission's subsequent action to accept the staff report for expansion of the UGB, emphasizing master planning the new area so as to involve the public and especially WKNA, and retaining the filbert trees until the Master Plan for the area can be developed.

Rhonda said the City Council will take up the matter at its May 5 meeting; Rhonda plans to testify once again regarding WKNA's priorities.

The group then toured some of the areas that have been suggested as sites for the play structure starting with Site B, which has been recommended to council. Because other sites in the orchard area subsequently have been proposed, city staff were directed to proceed with the UGB expansion. Without the expansion and comprehensive plan change in zoning, a playground would not be an acceptable use in that parcel, since current zoning is Exclusive Farm Use.

At Site B, Rhonda said one reason the site was recommended is that the area was listed on the 2006 Master Plan as a play structure site. There has been talk recently that the site may not be big enough to accommodate the toy because of proposed additions to the design. If that is the case, Rhonda has polled the WKNA Board, and also asked the tour group, about the possibility of removing the filbert trees in the southwest corner of the orchard property that are cut off from the remaining orchard by Walsh Way. This area already has been proposed as a picnicking area and could become parking for the play structure if more room south of Site B is needed for the structure itself.

The group raised questions about possibly using the open field areas or siting the play structure by the amphitheater. Rhonda said WKNA has not been favorable to the amphitheater site because of potential noise conflicts and the open field areas have been proposed as sites for future soccer fields.

The group then walked up Walsh Way past the corner tree parcel. Rhonda said that builders could spur off Walsh Way at the curve just north of the "picnic area" parcel and create parking for the play structure there. The lot also could serve as handicapped parking for the amphitheater as well as the play structure, a necessity because the Big Toy is being designed with handicapped accessible features. This site for parking also would relieve congestion concerns with the lower area.

The group then looked at proposals for other sites for the play structure: 1) the northwest corner of the orchard parcel at Chemawa and Walsh Way, proposed by Mayor Lore Christopher because of its greater visibility and for ease of access; 2) a plot extending into the orchard east of the dog park parking lot, proposed by Councilor Jim Taylor.

Rhonda said she was not in favor of the site east of the dog park parking lot because there would be limited visibility and it's away from other activity areas already established in the park. Safety concerns about children crossing Walsh Way also were brought up.

She asked if Board members present were comfortable with saying WKNA does not want the play structure sited east of Walsh Way. It would require tree removal and the Board has said it doesn't want any trees removed until the area is Master Planned. Clint also noted that the City also gets \$10,000 in rent from the orchard operator, which supports parks upkeep.

Ron said he felt that since the Board has backed Site B, any further action on any other site is premature. Carolyn said that it did not seem premature to consider options, since several have been proposed, but Ron said no other site has officially come before the Big Toy planning group.

Discussion also covered timing of a decision and the need to proceed with a Master Planning process. It was noted that Bill Lawyer, Keizer Public Works director, outlined a two-track effort he is preparing. One is fast-tracked and would present an outcome for Council consideration by July 7 and the other would allow for more public input and get to Council by the end of August or first meeting in September. The need for a speedy decision stems from the fact that Council has endorsed Site B unless another site officially comes up before July 1. If construction is to be done Sept. 17-21, a decision by July 1 is prudent because of site prep work that will be needed, whatever site is chosen.

The tour group discussed placement of access roads and walkways for the various sites, all in relation to the safety of children accessing the play structure. A consensus was that everyone wants the best spot for the structure. Most agreed that without looking carefully at the entire area and considering multiple uses, from soccer fields to tennis courts, it's hard to know what that is. There was general agreement that a Master Plan for the area before removal of any trees would avoid a piecemeal approach to something that should receive a long-range planning and public input review.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.